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THE KHASIS

SECTION I.

HABITAT.

101 162 THE Khasis reside in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They number 176,614 souls, which total is made up of:—

Khasis	107,515
Syntengs	47,883
Christian Khasis	17,125
Khasis inhabiting other districts	4,091
	176,614

131 162 563 The Khasi and Jaintia Hills district is situated between 25° 1′ and 26° 5′ North Latitude, and between 90° 47′ and 92° 52′ East Longitude. It contains an area of 6,157 square miles, with a total population at the Census of 1901 of 202,250 souls. In addition to the Khasis there are some members of Bodo tribes inhabiting parts of the district.

The Lyngam tribe appears to have been reckoned in 1901 as Khasi, there being no separate record at the last Census of these people.

101 131 [133] 563 The district is split up into two divisions, the Khasi Hills proper and the Jaintia Hills. The Khasi Hills form the western portion of the district and the Jaintia Hills the eastern. The Khasis inhabit the Khasi Hills proper, and the Syntengs, or Pnars, the Jaintia Hills. The latter hills take their name from the Rajas of Jaintia, the former rulers of this part of the country, who had as their capital Jaintiapur, a place situated at the foot of the Jaintia Hills on the southern side, which now falls within the boundaries of the Sylhet

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AZALEA WALK. SHILLONG. [Facing P.7]

(from a photograph by Mrs. Muriel.)

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Garo Hills	117
Manipur	69
Total	4,091*

The following information regarding the general aspect of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, with some additions, is derived from Sir William Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam. The district consists almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is very steep until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4,000 feet at Cherrapunji. Higher up there is another plateau at Mawphlang. This is the highest portion of the hills, some villages being found at as high an elevation as close on 6,000 feet above sea level. Fifteen miles to the east of Mawphlang, and in the same range, is situated the civil station of Shillong, at an average elevation of about 4,900 feet. The elevation of the Shillong Peak, the highest hill in the district, is 6,450 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1,000 and 2,000 feet below the level of Shillong, and another at an elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and more rank in the lower elevations. This denudation of forest has been largely due to the wood being used by the Khasis for fuel for iron smelting in days gone by. The Government, however, has taken steps to protect the remaining forests from further spoliation. A remarkable feature is the presence of numerous sacred groves situated generally just below the brows of the hills. In these woods are to be found principally oak and rhododendron trees. The fir-tree (Pinus Khasia) is first met with on the road from Gauhati to Shillong, at Umsning, at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. In the neighbourhood of Shillong the fir grows profusely, but the finest fir-trees are to be seen

* The figures for Khasi population in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district will be found under "Habitat."

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137 in the Jowai sub-division. In the vicinity of Nongpoh is observed the beautiful *nahor* or *nageswar*, the iron-wood tree. The latter is also to be found on the southern slopes of the hills in the Jowai sub-division. There are some *sal* forests to the west and south of Nongpoh, where the *sal* trees are almost as large as those to be found in the Garo Hills. Between Shillong and Jowai there are forests of oak, the country being beautifully wooded. Chestnuts and birches are also fairly common. The low hills on the northern and western sides of the district are clad with dense forests of bamboo, of which there are many varieties. The Pandanus or screw-pine is to 135 be met with on the southern slopes. Regarding the geological 133 formation of the hills, I extract a few general remarks from the Physical and Political Geography of Assam. The Shillong plateau consists of a great mass of gneiss, bare on the northern border, where it is broken into hills, for the most part low and very irregular in outline, with numerous outliers in the Lower Assam Valley, even close up to the Himalayas. In the central region the gneiss is covered by transition or sub-metamorphic rocks, consisting of a strong band of quartzites overlying a mass of earthy schists. In the very centre of the range, where the table-land attains its highest elevation, great masses of intrusive diorite and granite occur; and the latter is found in dykes piercing the gneiss and sub-metamorphic series throughout the southern half of the boundary of the plains. To the south, in contact with the gneiss and sub-metamorphics is a great volcanic outburst of trap, which is stratified, and is brought to the surface with the general rise of elevation along the face of the hills between Shella and Theriaghat south of Cherrapunji. This has been described as the "Sylhet trap." South of the main axis of this metamorphic and volcanic mass are to be found strata of two well defined series: (1) the cretaceous, and (2) nummulitic. The cretaceous contains several important coalfields. The nummulitic series, which overlies the cretaceous, attains a thickness of 900 feet in the Theria river, consisting of alternating strata of compact limestones and sandstones. It is at the exposure of these rocks on their downward dip from the edge of the plateau that are situated the extensive limestone quarries of the Khasi Hills. There are numerous

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limestone caves and underground water-courses on the southern face of the hills. This series contains coal-beds, e.g. the Cherrafield and that at Lakadong in the Jaintia Hills. Some description of the remarkable Kyllang Rock may not be out of place. Sir Joseph Hooker describes it as a dome of red granite, 5,400 feet above sea level, accessible from the north and east, but almost perpendicular to the southward where the slope is 80° for 600 feet. The elevation is said by Hooker to be 400 feet above the mean level of the surrounding ridges and 700 feet above the bottom of the valleys. The south or steepest side is encumbered with enormous detached blocks, while the north is clothed with forests containing red tree-rhododendrons and oaks. Hooker says that on its skirts grows a "white bushy rhododendron" which he found nowhere else. There is, however, a specimen of it now in the Shillong Lake garden. Numerous orchids are to be found in the Kyllang wood, notably a beautiful *white one, called by the Khasis u'tiw kyllang synrai*, which blooms in the autumn. The view from the top of the rock is very extensive, especially towards the north, where a magnificent panorama of the Himalayas is obtained in the autumn. The most remarkable phenomenon of any kind in the country is undoubtedly the enormous quantity of rain which falls at Cherrapunji.* Practically the whole of the rainfall occurs in the rains, i.e. from May to October. The remainder of the district is less rainy. The climate of the central plateau of the Shillong range is very salubrious, but the low hills in parts of the district are malarious. The effect of the different climates can at once be seen by examining the physique of the inhabitants. The Khasis who live in the high central plateaux are exceptionally healthy and strong, but those who live in the unhealthy "Bhoi country" to the north, and in the Lynngam portion to the west of the district, are often stunted and sickly. Not so, however, the Wárs who live on the southern slopes, for although their country is very hot at certain times of the year, it does not appear to be abnormally unhealthy except in certain

* The average rainfall at the Cherrapunji Police Station during the last twenty years, from figures obtained from the office of the Director of Land Records and Agriculture, has been 448 inches. The greatest rainfall registered in any one year during the period was in 1899, when it amounted to 641 inches.

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WORSHIP OF NATURAL FORCES AND OF DEITIES.

133 In the Khasi Hills, especially on the southern side, there are numerous rivers, sometimes of considerable size, which find their way to the Sylhet plains through very deep valleys, the rivers flowing through narrow channels flanked by beetling cliffs which rise to considerable altitudes. The scenery in the neighbourhood of these beautiful rivers is of the most romantic description, and the traveller might imagine himself in Switzerland were it not for the absence of the snowy ranges. Of such a description is the scenery on the banks of the river Kenchi-
823 yong, the Jádukátá * or Punatit of the plains. It is in the bed
776 of the river, a few miles below Rilang, that there is the
782 curiously-arched cavity in the rock which resembles an upturned boat, which the Khasis call *Ka lieng blei* (the god's boat), and the plains people Bashanya's ship. Near to this, on the opposite side of the river, there is a rock bearing a Persian inscription, but so defaced by the action of the water as to be impossible to decipher. Like other inhabitants of mountainous countries, the Khasis reverence the spirits of fell and fall, and
226 propitiate them with offerings at stated times. A brief descrip-
782 tion of the ceremonies which are performed at Rilang, on the
776 occasion when the annual fishing in the river Punatit takes
787 place, may be of interest. The three Siems of Nongstoin, Langrin, and Nobosohpoh each sacrifice a goat to *Ka blei sam um* (the goddess of the river) before the boatmen can cast in their nets. In former times they say the passage up the river was obstructed by the goddess, who took the form of an immense crocodile: but she was propitiated by the gift of a goat, and the boatmen were then allowed to pass up the river in their boats. Hence it became necessary for the owners of the fishery to sacrifice annually a goat each to the goddess. At the time of my visit each Siem's party erected an altar in the bed of the river, in the midst of which a bough of the Khasi oak (*dieng saing*) was planted. The goats were then decapitated, it being considered an essential that the head

* Lit.: Cut by magic.

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SECTION V.

FOLK-TALES, TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

FOLK-TALES.

773 128 THE Khasis possess a considerable amount of folk-lore. The tales which will be found reproduced in the original Khasi have been obtained from a collection which was in the possession of the Rev. Dr. Roberts, of Cherrapunji, who very kindly placed it at my disposal. The translations are by U Nissor Singh, Sub-Inspector of Schools, and the author of a Khasi English Dictionary as well as certain other educational works in that language. Dr. Roberts's collections would fill a book; so I have selected only a few of what I consider typical tales. At the instance of Sir Charles Lyall, I have given the Khasi and English side by side. The stories will speak for themselves, 133 but I add a few explanatory notes. The water-fall of Ka Likai 773 is a magnificent cascade in the rainy season; it can best be viewed from the heights of Laitkynsew. The water-fall is situated close to the village of Nongriat, which is approached by a succession of stone steps from the village of Tyrna, just below the Cherrapunji Laitkynsew bridle-path. "Dingiei," which is mentioned in the second tale, is the high hill to be seen on the right-hand side of the Shillong-Cherrapunji road soon after leaving Shillong. The highest point of the range is over 6,000 ft. The third tale contains the well-known story of Ka Pah Syntiew, the fabled ancestress of the Khyrim and Mylliem Siem families. The cave where Ka Pah Syntiew is said to have made her abode is still to be seen in the neighbourhood of Nongkrem. The story of the origin of the Siems of Suhtnga, who afterwards became the Rajas of Jaintiapur, is a well-known tale in the Jaintia Hills. A description of the

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wonderful mass of granite known by the name of the Kyllang Rock will be found in the section of the monograph which deals with geographical distribution. I have also added a photograph of the rock. The Syntengs have a story that when the strong west wind blows in the spring this is due to the advent of *U Kyllang*, who comes to visit his wife, the river *Umngot*, at that season: amongst the Khasis hills are all of them masculine, but to rivers is usually attributed the feminine gender. U Symper is another isolated rocky eminence rising from the Maharam plain close to the village of K'mawan. The best view of the hill is obtainable from Laitmawsiang on the path to Mawsynram. The village of Mawsmai every traveller from Therria to Cherrapunji knows. It is chiefly remarkable for a fairly large limestone cave, and its fine memorial stones. The Khasi theory to explain how the moon got its spots is, I believe, original, but is no more extraordinary than our own nursery tale about the "man in the moon." The *Sohpet Byneng* hill is the first hill of any size that the traveller sees on the Gauhati road when journeying to Shillong. It is close to Umsning Dak Bungalow. There are caves in the hill which are tenanted by bears. Strange to say, according to Khasi ideas, this is one of the highest points in the hills; in reality *Sophet Byneng* is some 2,000 ft. lower than the Shillong Peak. As mentioned elsewhere, the Khasis are very fond of dogs; so I have given their version of how the dog came to live with man. The well-known *thlen* superstition will be found fully described under the heading of "Human sacrifices." I have, however, thought the tale of sufficient interest to reproduce at length here. The story of the river Rupatylli is a pretty tale, and is just such a one as would appeal to the imagination of mountaineers like the Khasis. The Kopili story is important, in that it indicates the origin of human sacrifices in the Jaintia Hills; it also throws, perhaps, some light on the question of the use to which the flat table memorial stones were put in years gone by. The superstition about the crossing of the Kopili can be vouched for by many who have taken the journey from the Jaintia Hills to North Cachar by the Kopili route. Mawpunkyrtiang is a small village close to Cherrapunji. The weird tale about the Siem of Malyniang is the pride of the Maskut people, for in olden days their King.

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i.e. the Siem of Malyniang, is supposed to have been a very powerful monarch amongst the Khasis. The story of Manick Raitong is interesting, in that it explains the origin of the use of the *sharati*, a bamboo flute of special make which is played only at funerals. The pool of water, which was formed after U Manick and the erring queen were burnt, may be connected with the *Umkoi*, or tank, which is dug to cleanse the souls of those who have died violent deaths. The idea of the bamboo, which bore leaves that grew upside-down, springing up from the buried flute, is also to be found in the Synteng tale regarding U Loh Rymdi's fishing-rod. Owing to considerations of space, I have had to curtail largely the folk-lore section. I have, however, kept the materials by me, and if at any future time there is reason to believe that the reproduction of more Khasi folk-lore is called for, I shall be glad to try to arrange that some of the other folk-tales be printed.

THE WATER-FALL OF KA LIKAI.

The water-fall of Ka Likai is one of the most beautiful water-falls in the Khasi Hills. Its stream flows from a certain river from the village of Rangjirteh and passes by the village of Nongriat. The fall can be seen distinctly from the village of Laitkynsew. What a beautiful fall it is when viewed in the autumn. It is also a very high fall. There was in olden days in the village of Rangjirteh a woman called Ka Likai. She was a poor woman who had a husband. When she had given birth to a child, the husband died. Whilst the child was yet a baby, she experienced much trouble in taking care of it on account of her poverty. After the child was able to walk, what a pleasure it was to her to see it growing, and able to play with other children. Then that woman married

KA KSHAID KA LIKAI.

Ka kshâid-ka-Likai ka long kawei ka kshâid ha ri Khasi kaba itynnad shibún eh. Ka wan tuid na kawei ka wah ha ka shnong Rangjirteh kaba wan hap ha ka shnong Nongriat. Ia kane ka kshâid lah ban ioh-i bha na ka shnong Laitkynsew. Katno ka long kaba i-tynnad iada khmih ia ka ha ka por synrâi. Ka long ruh kaba jrong shibun eh. La don kawei ka briew ha ka shnong Rangjirteh hyndâi kaba kyrteng ka Likai. Kane ka briew ka long kaba duk bad ka la don u tnga, te ynda la kha iwei i khun kynthei uta u tnga u la iap noh. Hamar ka por ba dang lung ita i khun ka la shitom shibún ban sumar ha ka jinglong duk jong ka. Te ynda i la nangiâid katno, ka la sngewbhâ ban ioh-i ia la i khun ba i la shâit, bad ba i la nang ba'n leh kii bad ki para khynnah. Te kane ka

another man; but he did not love the little child, and many a time he got angry because she could not take care of him more, on account of that child.

One day when she went to carry iron ore, her husband took the child and killed it. When he had cut up the body into pieces, he prepared curry with it, and placed the curry where the mother would come and eat it. When he had finished doing so, he threw the head and the bones of the child far away, but he forgot to throw away the fingers, which he had placed in a basket where the betel-nut was kept. When the mother returned from her journey, she inquired "Where is the child?" "She has just gone somewhere, I don't know where," he said. She remained silent awhile; then she said, "Is there any rice and curry?" He said "Yes, it is ready," and went out at the same time. When she ate, she found the curry very tasty, and she thought that he had got the flesh of a young pig from some one who had performed a sacrifice. When she had finished eating, she took up the betel-nut basket, but found the fingers of her child there. She shrieked and threw herself down, and then ran to the precipice and cast herself down it. All the villagers wondered, but no one ventured to prevent her as she held a *da* in her hand. From that time the waterfall was called the "Fall of Ka Likai."

briew ka la shongkurim bad uwei pat u briew; hynrei uta u'm ieit ia ita i khún, bad katno ba u la jiw sngew bitár ba ka'm lah ban khreh ba'n sumar ia u na ka bynta ita i khún. 539

Te ha kawei ka sngi ba ka leit kit nongnar, utá u tnga u la shim ia ita i khún bad u la pyniap noh. Bad haba u la ot u la shet jintah ia ka doh jong i, u la buh ruh ha ka jaka ba ka'n wan bam ka kmie; bad ynda u la dep kumta baroh u la leit bred noh ia ka khlih bad ki shyieng sha jngái, hynrei ia ki shimpriahti ba u la buh ha ka shang kwái u'm kynmáw shuh ban leit bred. Haba la wan ka kmie na kata ka jingleit ka la kylli, "hangno ka khun"? "Tiŋ ei, u ong, shano ka leit kái myntan." Ka shu sngap noh bad ka ong "La don ja don jintah ne em" u ong, "la don," bad hamar kata ka por u leit kái noh. Te haba ka la bam ja, ka sngew bang shibún, bad ka la tharai ba u ioh doh khún sniang na kino-kino kiba kñia, bad haba ka la lah bám ja ka la shim ka shang kwái ba'n bam kwái, ka shem pynban da ki shimpriahti ita i khún bad ka la lyniar la lympat ia lade kat ba lah, bad ka la mareh sha katei ka riat bad ka la pynnoh ia lade. Kumta lyngngoh ki shnong-ki-tháw baroh bad y'm lah ba'n khang mano-mano ruh, ka bat la ka wait ha ka kti. Te nadúh kata ka por ki khot "ka kshâid-u-ob-ka-Likai."

The Dingiei Hill.

Dingiei Hill is one of the highest peaks in the Khasi

U Lum Dingiei.

U lum Dingiei u long u wei u lám uba jrong shibún ha ri 539 133

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country, resembling in height and size the Shillong "Peak" which lies opposite and to the north of it. There are many villages on this hill belonging to the Shillong Siem. In olden days on the top of this hill grew a gigantic tree overshadowing the whole world, the name of that tree was "ka Dingiei." The Khasis came to a determination that if this tree were cut down (lit. destroyed) the world would become good and would have light, for as long as it (the tree) remained standing, the world remained dark and unfruitful. They accordingly came to an unanimous decision to fell it. When they cut (the tree) during the day and went back next morning, they found that the marks of cutting had been obliterated. Thus they cut each day, and next morning they found that the marks had disappeared. This was the case always. Then they marvelled why this thing was thus. They asked questions and they investigated; ka phreid (a very small bird) said "all this has happened because a tiger comes every night to (the foot of) the tree and licks the part of the tree which has been cut." Thereupon the men, having plied their axes and knives the whole day in cutting the tree (instead of carrying them away as usual), tied them to the incisions, with their edges pointing outwards. So when the tiger went as usual at night to lick the incisions, the sharp blades of the axes and knives cut his tongue. Thenceforth the tiger ceased to go to the tree; and as the tiger ceased

Khasi. U eyrim ha ki jing jrong bad jingkhrew ia u liem Shillong, bad u long marpyrshah jong u shaphrang Shaisi. Halor uno u liem don bün ki shnong hapoh u Siem Shillong. Myrkyndei halor uno u liem don kawei ka dieng kaba khyiw shibün eh haduh ha ka ia kah dum ia ka pyrthei barah kawei, ka kyrteng kata ka dieng ki khot ka Dingiei. Ki khün Khasi ki la ia kut jingmut ba lada yn ioh pyndüh noh ia kane ka dieng ka'n bha ka'n shäi ka pyrthei, namar kaba ka dang long, ka pyrthei ka dum bad ka'n lah ban miash. Kumta ki la ia long da kawei ka jingmut ba'n ia khot noh ia ka. Te ynda ki la pom ia ka myrsang, ki leit pat myrsiep ki shem ba la dam noh ka dien pom. Kumta ki pom bang sa ka kawei ka sngi, ynda lashäi myrsiep ka dam-pa-dam bang. Nha kumta barabor ka jong. Hangta ki la lyngngoh, bate baiei ka long kumne. Ki ia kylli ki ia nobäit; ong ka phreid (ka sim kaba rit shibun) "kane ka jinglong ba dum kumne haba phi la pom ka long namar u khla myrmiet myrmiet u wat jliah ia ka dien ba phi la pom." Te kumta ki khün kynriew ynda ki la lah pom myrsngi barah shi sngi, myrmiet ki tah pyi-ang da ki wait ki adi ha kata ka jaka ba ki la lah pom. Kumta u khla haba u wat myrmiet u jliah phet u thyllaid haba kyndah ha kita ki eyrti wait eyrti adi. Kumtah nadah kata ka pur um wan shäh; bad ynda um ioh shah ban jliah kata ka dien pom u khün kynriew, eh kam dam shah. Nha sangbeg ka jingtrei man ka sngi hadih

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of U Loh Rymdi and Ka Lih Dohkha grew up, both of them returned to the stream Umwai Khyrwi. It is said that from the fishing-rod of U Loh Rymdi, which he left on the bank of the stream, there grew up bamboos, the joints and leaves of which grow upside down to the present day.

ryngkah kita ki khôn u Loh Rymdi lad Ka Lih Dohkha ki la leit noh bamoh ar ngut ha kata ka Umwai Khyrwi. Te ki ong ba na u ryngwiang khwai jong U Loh Rymdi, hatud um ha u la ieh noh, la long ki shken kiba ka mut ka long shongpong lad ka sla da kumjuh jan badon ngynta.

Kyllang and Synger.

Kyllang is a hill which is near the village of Mawmai in Khadsawphra, and Synger is a hill which is situated in the Sumdap of Maharam. The old folks say that there are gods which inhabit these hills, which are called U Kyllang and U Synger. These gods had a quarrel for some reason that we mortals do not know. They fought by throwing mud at one another. After they had fought, once or twice, U Kyllang proved victorious. So U Synger, having been humiliated, sits quietly in his own place to this day, and U Kyllang sits very proudly because he was victorious in the fight. The holes which are like tanks in U Synger's sides remain to this day; it is said that U Kyllang made those holes during the battle.

U Kyllang* and U Synger.

U Kyllang ja long u lîm uba hajan ka shnong Mawmâi ha Khadsawphra lad U Synger u dei u lîm uba long ha ri Maharam. Ha kine ki lîm ki symmon ki jiw thaiaî ha dîm ki khî kiba shong hangne kiba kyrsong U Kyllang lad U Synger. Kine ki khî bamoh ar ngut ki la ia kajia nanne kano kano ka daw kaba ngi u hynniw ngim leh ban tip. Te ki la iaieh bamoh ar ngut da kaba ia khawoh kiih. Tiaba ki la iaieh shi por ar por jop U Kyllang. Kumba U Synger u shong pyrsot ia baba la U. ka joka jan jar badoh ngynta, nad U Kyllang u shong da kaba angew khaiw angew sarong shibain ha u la jop ki ka jingiaieh. Ki thliw kiba long kane ki puket kiba don ha ki kreng u lîm Synger ki sah badoh ngynta; ki ong ha la pyndong ia kine ki thliw di. U Kyllang ha ka por iaieh.

The tree growing stone at Mawmai.

On the outskirts of Mawmai village, and to the west of it,

U Mawjong saka ha Mawmai.

Hadud nong Mawmâi da u wei u lîm uba shaphang

* Another version is that it was U Kyndiat, another hill in Sumdapong territory, who fought with U Synger.

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stands a hill; it is a very beautiful hill. From a distance it looks like the hump of a bull. It has big trees growing on it, as people are afraid to cut them because they believe that the god "Ryngkew" is there, who takes care of and protects the country. This hill has two names, U Mawlong Siem and U Lyngkrem. U Mawlong Siem is the smaller (peak) on the southern side, and U Lyngkrem the taller one, in which there is a cave. The Mawsmai people sacrifice once or twice a year according to the god's demand. The Mawsmai people have, besides U Mawlong Siem, other village gods (called "Ryngkew"). The name of the one is "U Rangjadong," and the name of the other "U Ramsong." Sacrifices are offered to these two also. U Mawlong Siem is a very great and strong god. The other gods dare not engage in battle with him. He has a daughter called "Ka Khmat Khasi" (i.e. the mouth of the abyss). The god of the Umwai people fell in love with this daughter, but he was unable to obtain her in marriage, as U Mawlong Siem did not like him. It is not possible to know the exact reason why the name of U Mawlong Siem was given to him, but as we say we appear that the name arose from the fact that in olden days before the death of a Siem there used to be heard as "Mawlong Siem," a great noise of beating of drums. The Mawsmai and the Mawmluh people used to hear it, and they attributed it to the god "Mawlong Siem," who beat the drum for his

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sepngi na ka shnong. Une u lêm uba i-tynnad shibin. Ban khymih na uba jingngéi u long kum u syntai mani kyrtong. U dom ki dieng kiba khriw ki bym jiw dom ba nóid ban thoh ban daih namar ba ki fiaw ba u long U Ryngkew u blei uba eunar uba da ia ka muluk ka jaka. Ia une u lêm ki khot ar kyrteng, U Mawlong Siem bad U Lyngkrem, U Máwlong Siem u long uta uba kham lynghot shaphang shathi, bad U Lyngkrem u long uta uba jerong eh bad uba dom ka krem Pubon hapuh. Ia une U Mawlong Siem ki Máwsmái ki jiw ai jingkaia da u blang shisin shi snem ne shi sin ar snem katba u pan. Ki Mawmluh ruh ki leh kumjah na la shnong. Nalor une U Mawlong Siem ki Máwsmái ki don shah ki Ryngkew hajan shgong, uwei U Rangjadong bad uwei pat U Ramsong. Ia kine ki khia. Une U Mawlong Siem u long u blei uba khriw shibin bad uba eh. Ki para blei kim nóid ban ia leh thyma ia ki. U-dom kawei ka khin kaba kyrteng "Ka Khymat Khasi," u blei ki Umwai u i-khu ia ka, hinrei um leh pei namar U Mawlong Siem im ongwitha ia u. Dan tip thikna ia ki diw bakei ba khot kyrteng Máwlong Siem ia u ym leh ban tip; hinrei la kumno kumno i-mut ba kane ka kyrteng ka la mih namar ba synhyndih haba yn sa iap Siem ia jiw ieh ongwi hangta ba U Mawlong Siem ba don ka jingsaws tam kaing kaba khriw shibun. Ki Mawsmai bad ki Mawmluh ki jiw ieh ongwi, bad ki jiw thawai ba u blei Mawlong Siem u tem kaing ban pynshóid khin. Lei ki haba la

L. Gurdon E-4, 5. (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

539 in the Rupatylli channel at Duwara. She was covered with shame, and she slackened her speed and split herself up into five branches, namely, ka Umtong,* ka Torasa, ka Pasuria, ka Kumarjani, and ka Duwara. Umiam did this so as to hide her shame from Umngot. This is how the river Rupatylli was formed at Duwara, to be a token that Umngot had been victorious in her contest with Umiew.*

leh khnang ba'n búh rieu ia la ka jingkhein burom ha khymat ka Umngot. Kumta sa long ka wah Rupatylli ha Duwara namar ka long ka dak ka jingjop ka Umngot ia ka Umiew.

The Kupli (Kopili).

539 133 484 782 The Kopili river rises in the "Black Mountains," † and flows northwards into the Brahmaputra. It is the boundary between the country of the Syntengs and that of the Hadems.‡ Any traveller who wishes to cross this river must leave behind him the rice which he has taken for his journey, and any other food that he may have taken with him. If he does not do so, even if he crosses the river at an unforbidden point, he is liable to offer a sacrifice to the Kopili goddess. The people offer to her three fowls and three goats outside the village, i.e. one to the goddess herself, and the other two to her sons, U Shyngkram and U Jali: and five fowls, that

Shaphang Ka Kupli, U Shyngkram bad U Jali, ki Ksuh jong ka.

Ka Kupli ka long ka wah na ki lám baiong bad ka táid da artet ha ka wah Brahmaputra. Ka long ka púd ia ka ri Synteng bad ka ri Hadem ha mihngi. Uno-uno u nongleit jingleit uba kwah ban jám ia kane ka wah Blei-Kupli u don kam ba'n bred noh ia la u khaw-ryneng ha shiliang wah, bad ia ki kynja jingbáim baroh phar, te un sa klan ia ka. Lada u'm da leh kumta, la'u klan na ka jaka ka b'ym sang ruh un háp jinguingáh ha ka. Ki khán-ki-hajár ia ka ba lum lái s'iar, lái bláng kawei ia ka. marmar uwei ia U Shyngkram bad U Jali: bad san s'iar ba ki'n ia baim angewbha baroh lái

* Both rivers, Umngot and Umiew, or Umiam, have their sources in or close to the Shillong Peak. The word "*Rupatylli*" signifies in Khasi a solid silver necklace of a peculiar shape. In order to appreciate this poetic tale thoroughly, the reader ought to view the river "Rupatylli" from the heights of Laitkynsew, or Mahadeo, whence it is to be seen *glistening* in the sun like a *rupatylli* or silver necklace.

† These mountains are the high hills which lie to the east of the Jowai Sub-Division, and which form part of the boundary line between the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and North Cachar.

‡ The word Hadem is possibly a corruption of "Hidimba," the old name for North Cachar.

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1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

they may all three feast together; this is in the case of one transgression only. But in the case of a man who has committed more than one, it is not possible to say how many goats and fowls must be sacrificed, because the river often demands offerings on account of a man's parents or relatives having crossed the river at some time or other.

From the time of the old Siem to that of U Ram Singh Siem, they used to sacrifice to this great goddess two persons during the months of November and December at the time of offering a sacrifice at Jaintiapur. After a ceremony performed by the Brahmins at Jaintiapur, the victims are led to the Mawshai (Shangpung) market, where they are allowed to take and eat anything they like. After that they conduct them to Sumer; but some say that the stone on which the victims are beheaded is situated below the village of Ka Iew Ksi, near a stream which falls into the Kopili, and where there is a *maikynthei* (flat table-stone) close to that sacred river.

They place the victims on that stone, where the executioner beheads them with a terrible sword. After that they throw the dead bodies and their heads into the river. But in the days of U Markuhain (U Raj Indro Singh) "who was our contemporary" they have ceased to do so out of fear of the East India Company. The victims are known by the name of "Mugha Khara."

At that time all the people of the territory of the twelve doloi were in a great state of ngut shi khún shi kymie, kata ka long haba long tang kawei ka lait, hinrei haba ka'n long katba shong ka lait u briew lei-lei, ngam tip ka'n long katno blang katno siar namar haba dei ka'n wan pán ka jingkñia namar ba la klan ia ka na khlieh lane na kyjat da u kyñie u kypa kano-kano ka iing lane kano-kano ka kur. Nadúh ki sngi ki Siem Tymmen haduh ki sngi U Ram Singh Siem ia kane ka blei bah ka kymai u lei ba khraw ki kñia da ki briew ár-ngùt shi snem shi snem hamar u bynái ba ki puja ne ai ngúh ha Jaintiapur, kata, hamar u 'nái wieng bad u 'nái nohprah. Ynda ki la kñia ha Jaintiapur da ki Bramon, ki sa ia lam ia ki sha ka iew Mawshái ne ka iew Shangpung ba ki'n bám shiwa katba mon na kata ka iew. Nangta pat sha Sumer, kiwei pat ki ong ba u máw ba ki khrái khlieh ia ki Muga Khara u don harum ka shnong Iewksi hajan kawei ka wah kaba túid sha ka Kupli—sha ka jaka ba don ka máw kynthei harúd kata ka wah blei Kumta ki sa kyntiw halor kata ka maw kynthei ia ki; nangta pat wan sa u nongkhrai khlieh bad ka wait ba i-shyrkhei, u khrai ia ki hangta. Hadin kata ki sa shat ia ki met-iap sha um bad ia ki khlieh jong ki ruh de. Hinrei ha ki sngi U Markuhain ne U Raj-Indro Singh uba ha Khyjong ngi mynta ym long shúh kumta namar ha u tieng ia ka Kompani. Ia kine ki briew ba ki kñia ki khot kyrteng ia ki ki Muga Khara.

Mynkata ki bynriew shi khadár doloi sngew tieng, ki ong ba ki nongkem ki da kylli shiwa ia ka jaid, ki da leh ia lade kum ki bym mut ba'n leh

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782 One month before the celebration rice liquor is poured into a hollowed-
796 out gourd bottle in the house of the S'iem sad and offered before the rishot Blei as a 'suit' (sacrifice of drink). This is done in order to in-
[769] form the u Suidnia long S'iem (the spirit of the first great-uncle on
[774] the maternal side who was the first king), the ka Blei long S'iem (the divinity who makes kings kings) and the u Blei Shillong (the god Shillong), that preparations are now being made for the Puja and that they might help with them.

776 The u Blei Shillong plays the chief part in the whole ceremony. He enjoys great reverence among the Khasi, especially in the king-
[133] dom Nongkrem and Nylliem. Not far from Nongkrem a mountain peak rises 6,450 feet above the sea. It is the highest peak in the Khasi Mountains, its name is "Shillong Peak." Here is the seat of
[773] the god Shillong. The story goes that a man appeared here once, who said he /894/ had not been born but came of himself (shu long). He also told the people that they would receive the kings, S'iem. So the god who lives here was called u Shu long (he who is out of him-
[163] self), from which the Europeans gradually made the word Shillong and also gave this name to the splendid mountain station in the heart of the Khasi Mountains.

796 After the S'iem sad has determined exactly the day of the cere-
782 monies, the news of this is sent out two weeks prior to the ceremony to the village elders (Rangbah shnong). This is done on the day of the large market (jaw duh), which takes place every eighth day. Two weeks after is the pom blang, also on the day of the large market, which is discussed below.

The way in which the invitation is issued is interesting. A num-
[214] ber of chains about an ell long are made of bamboo rings. These are called kyrwoh. One of these is sent to the oldest man of each village. Since the Khasi formerly had no script, this bamboo chain always served as a sign of invitation or summons to the S'iem for ceremonies, or of danger of war, or of court matters and such. The degree of urgency was shown by the form of the links; in the case of great haste the form was longish and flat, otherwise correspondingly rounder. The sending of the kyrwoh to the village elders serves now as a sign of invitation for the whole village to appear at the ceremonies and at the same time as a demand to gather together the prescribed sacrificial gifts. Each of the six districts, into which the kingdom Nong-
[651] krem is divided, must furnish a goat; each individual but must pay a tax (called pynthoh) of one rupee and four annas in addition. Very poor people only have to pay one anna or even only a half. The sacrificial gifts, such as rice, various sacrificial animals, fish, brandy

Family Property and Maternal Rights

/127/ by C. Becker S.D.S., Wurzburg

114 The fall of 1910 and the entire following year found the distinguished head of the Ethnographic Museum in Munich, to whom this anniversary volume is dedicated, on a research and collection trip in the extensive and inexhaustible territories of India. He was accompanied by his active wife, who served as his scientific assistant. From Burma, a mine of rich, ethnographic treasure and where the greatest part of their Indian stay was spent, their journey led the research couple into Assam, situated in the northeast of India, a country of equal significance. Assam certainly belongs politically to an-
101 terior India, but forms a bridge to interior India both ethnographically and linguistically.

Among the mountain peoples who inhabit the chain of hills which traverses the length of present-day Assam, and which separates the two largest parts of the country from each other, the Brahmaputra Valley in the north and the Surma Plain in the south, is one of the most interesting and doubtless the most advanced of the tribes, the Khasi, who inhabit the so-called Khasi and Jaintia Mountains. It
[631] was in Shillong, the center of this area, which is now the capital of the country Assam under the English government, where towards the end of September, 1911, I first became acquainted with Professor D. L. Scherman and his wife and where a friendship of many years
• 133 had its beginning. Therefore this little study will lead us to the Khasi Mountains, to its slopes overgrown with its peculiar pine trees, which receive greetings across the plains from the snow-crowned peaks of the Himalayas, which are flooded by the mighty waves of the Brahmaputra River and the alternating inundations of the Surma River. Here a contented and cheerful little people live who have maintained their own special characteristics in spite of the many European influences and those of neighboring cultures.

162 /128/ Of the entire population of 243,263 people, who form the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintai Mountains (1), 203,855 are Khasi.

1. The following statistical estimates are taken from the Census of India 1921, Vol. III, Assam, (Shillong, 1923) pp. I and II.

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777 Of those, 31,852 have adopted Christianity, while the others are still adherents of ancient animistic cults, with the exception of somewhat

10: Clarke U-3 (no date)1874 AR7 Khasi AR7

The STONE MONUMENTS *of the* KHASI HILLS. By C. B. CLARKE. [Communicated by Professor H. Fawcett, through Sir John Lubbock, Bart].*

131 THE Khasi Hills form a plateau, at a mean elevation of 4,500 feet above the sea, between the plain of Assam on the north and the plain of Sylhet on the south. They are inhabited by the 101 Khasi tribe, a people very distinct from the Hindoos north and south of them, and who are a branch of a race which extends eastward as far as South China. Immediately east of them are the Jaintea people, also called Sintengs, who are very closely allied in race and customs to the Khasi tribe. The 133 Jaintea country is physically a portion of the same plateau as the Khasi, and is only arbitrarily divided from it, and exhibits the same grassy hill-tops. The Khasi and Jaintea tribes together occupy the political district administered by the Deputy-Commissioner of Shillong, and the whole plateau is accordingly called the Shillong Plateau by Mr. Medlicott, the Dep.-Superintendent of the Geological Survey in India. Shillong is the English station which is the political capital. The plateau is remarkable for its freedom from the dense jungle which covers the neighbouring Himalayas at similar elevations; it is a fine rocky moor-like plateau, with isolated

* The woodcuts illustrating this paper have been kindly lent by Mr. Murray.

[p. 481]

10:Clarke U-3 (no date)1874 AR7 Khasi AR7

133 patches of open forest, and with scattered fir trees and oaks. Though south of the Himalaya range the character of the
137 country is more like that found in the Himalayas at 4,000 feet higher elevation, and many plants, never collected in the Himalayas below 9,000 feet above sea-level, are found in the Khasi Hills between 4,500—6,000 feet. In this marvellous plateau the sub-alpine and the sub-tropical forms overlap; at the very foot of elegant palms may be gathered the identical stag's horn moss, which, in Britain, is found only on mountains. On a fir tree much resembling a scraggy Scotch-fir is seen growing the Vanda cœrulea, the king of epiphytic orchids; a gnarled oak will carry a gigantic tropical liane; the painted lady and many other British species of lepidoptera will be accompanied by gorgeous tropical papilios and by window moths eleven inches across the wing; the cuckoo and Himalayan pheasant are above, while the tiger, the wild elephant and the green python are below. Justly has Dr. Hooker observed, "I know no spot in the world more calculated to fascinate the naturalist who, while appreciating the elements of which a landscape is composed, is also keenly alive to the beauty and grandeur of tropical scenery."

211 2. Almost throughout Khasi-land, and in a less degree through the Jaintea country, monumental stones are common. They are numerous in villages in the valleys, but are specially prominent, and sometimes of gigantic size, scattered over the rounded hill-tops where they form a feature in the landscape. In all modern treatises of Archæology and Anthropology the study of monumental stones forms an important chapter. Monuments of a remarkable similarity in design are found alike in Europe, Asia, and isolated islands in the Pacific Ocean, and these are in general of such extreme antiquity that they are treated as belonging to the prehistoric age. The Khasi stone monuments have attracted already much attention; first because of their great number and size; and, secondly and chiefly, because on these hills the erection of these monuments is now in full practice. It is reasonably supposed that a careful study of the Khasi method of raising the stones, and of the traditions or customs in accordance with which they raise them, may throw some light upon more ancient monuments of the same kind, even upon Stonehenge. It has been proposed to send out a commission from England to survey these Khasi stone monuments. They are described by Dr. Hooker, in his work (Min. Journ. II. 276), also by Colonel Raban in the *Calcutta Review*, and some account has been lately given by Major Godwin-Austen in the "Journal of the Anthropological Institute," No. 2, Oct. 1871.[1] The present memoir was written

[1] [This article has been processed for the file —Analyst]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The homeland of the Khasi is the hilly country situated in the northeast of India and known at present as the District of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, under the Assam State Government. The area is bounded by the plains of the Kamrup and the Nowgong Districts to the north, by the Cachar Hills and East Pakistan (District of Sylhet) to the south, and by the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills Districts to the east. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills are divided politically into two subdivisions, with headquarters at Shillong for the Khasi Hills, and at Jowai for the Jaintia Hills, respectively. The peoples of both subdivisions are called "Khasi" in a broad sense, and are distinctly marked off from other neighbouring tribes and peoples by language and social structure. The population of the Khasi in the District is 363,599 *(Census of India, 1951, Assam)*. Their language belongs to one of the Mon group of the Austro-Asiatic family to which the Munda in central India also belongs.[1]

Though all Khasis share fundamentally the same language and social structure, their culture, dialects, economy, social usage, and political organization vary greatly, owing to the ecological and politico-historical differences among them. The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills are much higher than the neighbouring Garo Hills. The plateau of the Khasi Hills ranges from about 5,000 feet to 6,000 feet, of which

1. The *Census of India, 1951, Assam*, makes the following remarks on their language: "Their nearest kinsmen have been discovered to be the Palaungs, a tribe inhabiting one of the Shan States to the northeast of Mandalay on the middle Salween. Later the relationship of the Khasi language has been traced not only to the Mon-Khmer language, but also to the Nicobarese and several dialects spoken by some tribes in the Malay Peninsula. In Assam, this special form of speech is only found in the Khasi and Jaintias while nearly all the other primitive languages with which it is surrounded belong to the great Bodo family. The Khasi language is the only member of the Mon-Khmer family which possesses a grammatical gender distinguishing all nouns as masculine and feminine, and here also the feminine nouns immensely preponderate."

[P. 95]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

133 the highest point is the Shillong Peak, 6,445 feet, covered with scrub, grassland and forests (mostly oak, rhododendron and pine trees). The 137 Jaintia Hills are considerably lower, with much flat land; wet paddy cultivation is practised here and there where sufficient water is available. From the plateau of the Khasi Hills northwards to the Assam Brahmaputra Valley there is a gentle slope covered with thick jungle, and the southern slope towards the Bengal plain is very steep, so that

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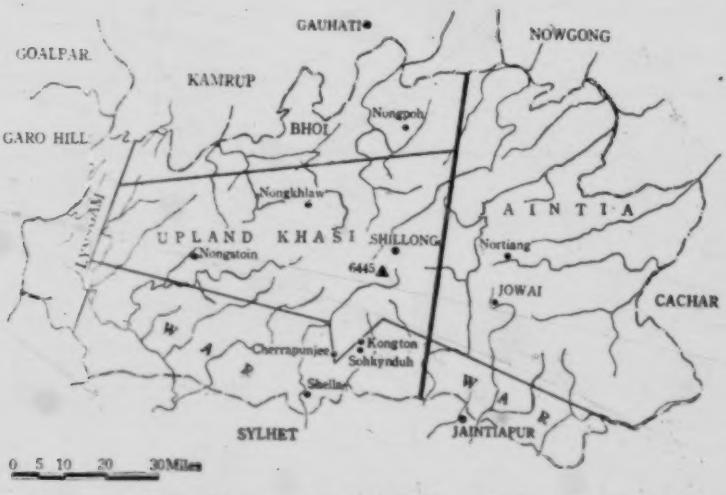

MAP. . — *Map of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills with Classification of Groups.*

133 the upland remained practically cut off from the plains until the 137 middle of the 19th century.

Following the geographical and ecological differences, the five 619 groups are segregated into fairly well-defined cultural areas, each [131] developing a different economy and dialect:

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1. The Jaintia[1] — associated mostly with wet rice cultivation.
2. The Khasi (upland Khasi) — practise potato cultivation with small-scale rice and maize cultivation.
3. The War — inhabit the southern slope of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills (they are called geographically the Khasi War and the Jaintia War). Due to the heavy rainfall, the soil is the most fertile in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The Khasi War practise jhuming of which the main yield is millet. In the lower part of this area, pan-leaf, betel-nut, and orange gardens are cultivated. The Jaintia War practise wet rice cultivation like most of the Jaintias, as well as pan-leaf cultivation.

1. They are called also the Synteng or the Pnar.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

APPENDIX

SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM SHELLA AND JATINGA

SHELLA

Shella is situated on the lowest of the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills, bordering on the Sylhet plain of East Pakistan. For centuries the people of Shella maintained close trading connections with the people of the plain, so that they have been much influenced by the Hindu. They have been to some extent divorced economically and culturally from their own people who live in the uplands and on higher part of the slopes. Actually, this is a natural result of their geographical location. From Cherrapunjee, the southern edge of the upland Khasi Hills, only a narrow footpath goes down to Shella. The altitude of Cherrapunjee is about 5,000 feet and of Shella from 500 to 1,000 feet, and the distance between them is 8 miles. The path descends very steeply and is full of hard stones. This difficulty of communication is also why the Hindu influence did not penetrate the upland Khasi, as in the case of the Jaintia Hills.[1]

This area has a unique political organization which differs from the majority of Khasi states who are traditionally ruled by the members of the Siem clan. Shella is organized as a confederation, called 'Shella Confederacy,' and consists of four local villages. The head of the village is called *wadadhar*, and is elected by the villagers every three years. The number of households of the Shella Confederacy was about 900 in January 1956. The names of the four villages and their *wadadhar* in 1956 were:

Name of village	*Name of wadadhar*
1. Shella	Devish Mohan Roy
2. Mushtoh	Ditojou Roy
3. Nongtrai	Orju Roy
4. Tyngnger	Jabuni Roy

Each village is divided into sections. For instance, Shella village has nine sections: (1) Jasir, (2) Disong, (3) Duba, (4) Jamau, (5) Nongrum, (6) Nongnong,

1. However, Shella was the only way out and the main gateway from the Khasi Hills to the plain; it was here that the British first entered the Khasi Hills. They proceeded from Shella to Cherrapunjee and made the latter headquarters of the Khasi Hills in 1833.

group of matrilineal and Mon-Khmer-speaking people who claim as their ancestral homeland the present-day United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (within approximately 90° 47′ and 92° 52′ E. and 25° 5′ and 26° 5′ N.). This group includes the Jaintias (also Pnar or Synteng) in the southeast, who differ from the Khasis primarily in their duolocal residence pattern and less virulent forms of sorcery. (The Hadem in eastern Jaintia are a Kuki people.) It also includes the Lyngngams (also spelled Lynngam) in the west, who practice migratory swidden agriculture and certain peculiar funerary rites, and are said by Ehrenfels (1955) to be culturally intermediate between Khasis and Garos. Finally, it includes Bhois, Wars, and upland Khasis, which terms are primarily territorial. Bhoi country is the north-central part of the District, and is culturally complicated by the presence of Mikirs, Lalungs, and Nepalis. War country spans the entire southern length of the District, so that Wars divide into Jaintia Wars and Khasi Wars; of these, the Khasi Wars have traditionally transmitted property to sons as well as to daughters. The upland center of the District is the country of the Khasis proper, those whose culture provides the most useful model for interpreting the variations found elsewhere. [For general reference on all categories of Khasi culture, cf. Costa 1936 and 1937; also Gurdon 1907, especially for data on regional variations.] **Geography.** The District is 5,554 square miles of hilly tableland, intricately dissected by numerous rivers, and marked by significant ecological variation over very short distances. The tablelands step gently downward north from Shillong Peak, which at 6,445 feet is the highest point in the District, and over about 55 miles ease into the Brahmaputra valley where this is some 250 feet above sea level. To the south, the land slopes more steeply downward for about 20 miles, and then drops abruptly, in cliff and steep-slope formations, to the Ganges sea-level delta that begins at its north with Sylhet. The annual southwest monsoons drop torrential rains around Cherrapunji and Mawsynram villages (for Cherrapunji, a record 805 inches in 1861), but then, reaching Shillong 33 miles to the northeast, provide only about 100 inches per year. Rainfall is again greater in Bhoi, which shares the Brahmaputra valley climate. Climate is temperate on the high Shillong plateau, where it seldom freezes and never snows. To the north, climate becomes subtropical, forest is jungly, and fauna abound. The climate to the south is also subtropical. [Cf. Hooker 1891: chap. XXIX.] **Linguistic affiliation.** Khasi is one of the major Mon-Khmer languages, related to Mon, Khmer, Semang-Sakai, Nicobarese, and Palaung-Wa. The major Khasi dialects are Khasi, Jaintia, and Lyngngam, to which Grierson adds War. Further minor variations occur from village to village. The Khasis had no script until 1842, when the roman alphabet was successfully applied to the Cherrapunji dialect of Khasi proper. [Cf. Rabel 1961; Grierson 1903-28: 2; Bareh 1962.]

18: Godwin-Austen G-3 (ca. 1872) 1875 AR7
Khasi AR7

rude stone monuments. At the village of Nougshai, near Shillong, are to be seen some very striking monoliths; and although they do not come up quite to the length of those at Nurtiang (noticed by Dr. Hooker in his "Himalayan Journals"), yet they are very worthy of being mentioned. They stand on the open spur just above the village, and have been worked out of the beds of the Shillong sandstone series, and some of the smaller blocks have been taken from the conglomerate beds, the lowest in the series, and which come in, in the bed of the ravine, to the north of the spur. There are a number of monuments on this site, large and small, arranged both in line and on two sides of a square; the two largest have their central monoliths—height, 24 ft. 3 in.; width, 5 ft. 6 in.; thickness, 8 in.; and height, 23 ft. 2 in.; width, 2 ft. 9 in.; thickness, 1 ft., respectively.

Plate ii., which is taken from a photograph by Mr. William Robert, Assistant Surveyor in the Khasi Hills survey party, gives an excellent idea of the second largest structure, showing the very massive flat-stone, the "Mao Kynthai," in front. This structure consisted of thirteen upright stones, which could not all be brought into the field of the camera; but the six outside stones on the right are shown. Many of the slabs in the adjacent monuments have been overthrown and broken quite recently, perhaps by Sepoys and camp followers from the military station close by. At one time a mountain battery of Eurasian Artillery was quartered there, and I attribute the overthrow of so many of the stones in the neighbourhood to their handiwork, who would look on such amusement as a "great lark." The Sepoy (native of India) is not of a mischievous disposition; the European and half-European (uneducated) is markedly so. Thus the monument with the highest stone is imperfect, and it must, when perfect, have been a very handsome one. This is a sad pity, after the time and labour that must have been expended in its erection.

I did not observe any new slabs anywhere in the immediate neighbourhood. Nougshai must formerly have been a large and powerful village; it stands on a naturally very strong position, and old lines of fortification are to be traced on many sides, especially on the approach from the direction of the Falls of the Umiam. These old lines of defence are on a curious system: a ditch and bank have been carried forward from the main defences from 200 to 300 yards down the ridge of the spurs, thus effectually preventing an enemy working round the hill sides below the villages.

This fortified site points to a state of things in these hills when the relations between the large village communities or

19: Assam G-5 (1958) 1963 AR7 Khasi AR7

CHAPTER II

General features of the district

128 2.1 In this chapter a brief note on the geography, population and economy of the district is given in order to provide a perspective and make the report self contained.

133 **2.2 Relief.**—The whole of the district is composed of hill tracts. On the northern and western border these hills take the form of tumbled ranges which run for the most part north and south and have a general height of two to three thousand feet. None of the hills in the central and southern portions of the district has anything rocky or precipitous about them. Their sides are covered with short grasses and from one direction or another, they can generally be negotiated by a man on horseback. There is a high plateau in the centre of the district, the general level of which is not much below 6000 feet though it decreases in height towards east and west.

2.3 Rivers.—The high plateau that traverses the centre of the district is the watershed of the hills. The following are the principal rivers. On the west there is the Jadukata, or Kynshi river, further east come the Um Maopa and the Boga-i which fall into the Surma. The Umngot or Maheskhali, known as the Pyian Gang in the plains of Sylhet, forms for a considerable distance the boundary of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. On the north the principal rivers are Kakhri, the Digaru and Umiam. Farther west comes the Umkhen, Um Myntang and the Mynriang. All these rivers possess the characteristics usually associated with hill streams. The beds are rocky and gravelly; the currents swift and after heavy rains even small streams come down in spate. The rivers of the district are not used for traffic to any appreciable extent.

135 **2.4 Minerals.**—The Geological products of economic value are lime and coal. From the earliest days of British rule, the lime quarries of Khasi Hills formed one of the principal attractions of Sylhet, drawing a large number of Europeans to that district. The lime quarries are situated all along the southern face of the hills. Coal is found both in the cretaceous and nummulitic formations. The largest deposits of nummulitic coal are found at Cherrapunjee, Laitryngew, Mawlong, Mustoh, Mawsynram, Mawdon, Thanjinath, Lakadong and Narpuh. Cretaceous coal is found in Maobchlarkar, Barsora, Wapung Laitkynsew and in the Langrin field.

137 **2.5 Forests.**—The district exhibits a varied flora reflecting the variations in the physical features, configuration of the ground, adaphic factors and climatic gradient. In the pine zone, covering areas between 2500'- 6200' elevation are found the pines, birch, schima, oak, beech, etc. The evergreen hardwood zone, which forms belt along the foothills contains useful hardwood species of which the most important species are sal, nahor, cham, chap, gomari, etc. The dry grassy belt covering the lower slopes roughly between 500'-2500' elevation form the ideal ground for graziers.

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Khásiás, have, ever since the measures of improvement which followed, remained peaceable and contented.

General Aspect of the District.—The District consists almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is steep, until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4000 feet. Higher up there is another plateau at Máo-flang, ten miles to the eastward of which, and in the same mountain range, the Civil Station of Shillong is situated at an elevation of 4900 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1000 and 2000 feet below the level of Shillong, and the second lower down, about 3000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and more rank in the lower elevations. A remarkable feature in the aspect of the country throughout the hills is the numerous sacred groves which superstition has preserved from time immemorial from the destructive hand of the woodcutter. These sacred groves contain beautiful timber-trees of various kinds, rare orchids, rhododendrons, and wild cinnamon. On the more elevated table-lands, pine trees and stunted oak are met with; and in the lower hills, in every direction, are dense forests of the usual Indian trees, containing valuable timber.

The geological formation is mainly granitic, with stratified rocks of sandstone, limestone, and shale. The coal-beds rest on trap and metamorphic rocks. The prevailing surface soil is a red ferruginous loam.

Mountains.—The principal mountain ranges and highest peaks in the Khási and Jáintiá Hills are as follow:—(1) The Shillong range—height of principal peak, 6449 feet above sea level. (2) Dingiei range—principal peak, 6400 feet. (3) Máo-thad-rái-shán range—highest peak, 6297 feet. (4) Láo-syn-niá range—highest peak, 5775 feet. (5) Láit-máp-doh range—highest peak, 5377 feet. (6) Láo-ber-sát—highest peak, 5400 feet. (7) Láo-bah range—highest peak, 4464 feet. (8) Lyng-ker-dem range—highest peak, 5000 feet. (9) Lúm-baiong range—highest peak, 4646 feet. (10) Máo-syn-ráin range—highest peak, 5810 feet.

The principal mountains are:—(1) Rap-leng—height, 5671 feet.

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(2) Soh-pet-byneng, literally 'The Navel of the Sky.' This is supposed by the Khásiás to be the centre of the world, and to be the highest peak in the hills. Its real altitude, however, is only about 4000 feet. (3) Sywer—height, 6050 feet. (4) Shillong—height, 6449 feet. (5) Dingiei—height, 6400 feet. (6) Kyl-lang rock, one huge mass of stone, about 500 feet high, and of a rounded form—height above sea level, 5684 feet. (7) Láit-blih—height, 5800 feet. (8) Láit-derá—height, 6000 feet. (9) Thanji-náth—height, 4448 feet. (10) Nong-jrong—height, 4995 feet. (11) U Mún—height, 6221 feet. (12) Máo-flang—height, 5931 feet. (13) Máo-ká-leng—height, 5900 feet. (14) Már-py-nuá—height, 5600 feet. (15) Symper—height, 5700 feet. (16) Máo-ngi—height, 5810 feet. (17) Láit-már-kán—height, 5313 feet. (18) Nong-syn-rih—height, 5585 feet. (19) Más-keyn—height, 5306 feet. (20) Nong-khrong—height, 5606 feet. (21) Kalái-iong-ngain—height, 5128. (22) Máo-lih-bah—height, 4252 feet. (23) Pattar-kyl-lang—height, 5755 feet.

The mountain peaks are of various forms and shapes, but generally conical, and capped by sacred groves. No roads exist to permit the ascent of carriages, but most of the hills can be ascended by beasts of burden, even without made tracks. In the eastern portion of the District the hills are covered with forest.

RIVERS.—No navigable rivers flow through the hills, the streams being all mountain torrents. On some of the large streams, however, near the point where they debouch upon the plains, small canoes are used for short distances below the rapids. The principal streams flowing south to the Surmá river in Sylhet are the following:—(1) The Kyn-chi-ong, named Jádukátá by the Bengális in the plains; (2) the Tanglá, called Mukáli in the plains; (3) the Bograh, called Bogápáni in the plains; (4) the Soh-syng-kew, called Dhuláli in the plains; (5) the Mungát, called Pein in the plains; (6) the Mán-tyh-da, called Hári in the plains; and (7) the Lukái or Lubá. The principal tributaries to the Brahmaputra are:—(1) The Kapilí; (2) the Um-khen, called Barpáni in the plains; (3) the Um-idm; (4) the Um-tru, called Digru in the plains; and (5) the Ka-khri, called Kulsi in the plains. All the foregoing streams have numerous feeders of their own, but none of them are of any importance.

The Khási and Jáintiá Hills are, like all mountainous countries, intricately watered, and the streams run over rocky beds, some passing through cultivated lands. As they approach the plains,

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they form rapids, the waters precipitating themselves down deep, rocky gorges and chasms, choked with huge boulders. Some of these gorges are very beautiful; the streams, being hemmed in between stupendous mountains and rocks covered with primeval forest, run in narrow but very deep channels swarming with fish. No islands or lakes are formed by any of the rivers, although several of them have large, deep pools. They are all unfordable during the rains.

UTILIZATION OF THE WATER SUPPLY.—None of the rivers are utilized as a motive power for turning machinery, although the streams on the higher plateaux might be easily turned to such an account. Their waters, however, are extensively used for the purposes of irrigation, and the hill people display great ingenuity in cutting channels or aqueducts for leading the water on to their fields. It is in this manner that the Civil Station of Shillong receives its water supply. Aqueducts convey water to the houses of all the European residents; and branch channels from the main aqueduct flow through the *bázár*, and along the streets occupied by the native inhabitants. No fishing towns exist in the hills; but near where the rivers debouch upon the plain are some valuable fisheries, which are annually let in farm, the lessees being generally Bengális. These fisheries yield an annual Government revenue of about £300. Embankments in order to protect the land against floods do not exist. A few embankments, or rather dams, are thrown across narrow valleys between hills, so as to create reservoirs for water. At Shillong there are a few tanks thus formed, which are both useful and ornamental.

MINERALS, ETC.—Coal and limestone, both of excellent quality, are found in abundance. Lower Bengal obtains nearly the whole of its lime supply from the Khási and Jáintá Hills. The lime is known as 'Sylhet lime,' and is obtained by quarrying from the beds of stone which line the base of the mountains along the whole length of the Sylhet boundary. The supply is literally inexhaustible. Coal out-crops at Cherrá Púnji, Lákádong, Shellá, Máo-syn-ram, and at several other places; but as a rule it is scattered, and found in places difficult of access. The coal, however, is of excellent quality, and leaves very little ash. Stone, well adapted for building purposes, is also found. Ironstone exists almost everywhere throughout the Hills, but principally in the dependent States of Khyrim, Nongpoong, Cherrá, and Mylliem. In former years the Khásás were

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In former years the Khásiás were great iron-smelters, and enormous excavations in the most favourable localities for obtaining ironstone prove the extent to which this manufacture was carried on. In some places the whole surface of the ground appears to have been dug up for a depth of several feet, leaving huge boulders standing up here and there. Of late years, however, as the price of labour in the Hills has risen, the trade in iron has died away, and there is now little demand for the Khási article, the cheaper English metal having driven it out of the market.

NATURAL PHENOMENA.—Many peculiar caves and caverns are found in the limestone rock formation, the most notable being the caves at Cherrá Púnji and at Rápunjí in Amwí. At the latter place the caverns extend a great distance beneath the earth, one being imagined by the people to reach as far as China, and a Hindu legend states that a Chinese army once marched by this route to the invasion of India. In another cave, the limestone stalactites have been carved into images representing the gods of the Hindu pantheon. On the banks of the Kapili river on the Cáchár border, at a place called Sumir, there is a hot spring, the water of which contains carbonate of lime. All the rivers in the Hills flow through gorges in certain parts of their course, the most picturesque being at Tobrá, where a small stream is compressed into deep pools among limestone rocks; and at Dumsang and Berghát, where the Mangot and Mantidoo rivers respectively debouch upon the plains.

FORESTS, ETC.—The India-rubber or caoutchouc tree is found in many forests throughout the Hills, but not in great numbers, and the supply and value of the gum has much decreased of late years. In 1870 the right of tapping the trees in the Jáintiá Hills was leased out for a sum of £56, 10s. od.; but by 1876 the trade had almost entirely ceased. There are some tracts of timber forest on the lower hills towards the Brahmaputra valley, but through the want of water carriage they are of no great value. Vigorous efforts are being made to preserve the forests in the higher plateaux. Owing to the habit of firing the jungle in spring prior to sowing, great waste of valuable timber has taken place; but since the country has been separated from Bengal and placed under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, attention has been given to the matter, and special areas are now being set apart for the preservation and growth of forest timber. Cinnamon grows wild in some parts of the country. There is a considerable trade carried on in

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132 in 1876, the highest maximum temperature was registered in the month of August, the lowest minimum in January. From November until the end of March the weather is dry and bracing. Hoar-frost lies upon the ground almost every morning in the months of December, January, and February. Shallow water occasionally freezes over, but snow never falls.

The rainfall at Cherrá Púnjí is enormous, varying between 300 and 500 inches per annum. The heaviest fall is in the months of June and July. As much as 30 inches has been collected in one day in July, and 157 inches has been registered as the total rainfall of that month. The average rainfall of the three years ending in 1876 is returned at 368·41 inches. It is affirmed that a total of 805 inches fell in 1861, of which 366 inches is assigned to the single month of July. This excessive rainfall can be readily accounted for by the abrupt manner in which the hills at Cherrá Púnjí rise from the plains on the south. The vapour-bearing breezes of the south-west monsoon, sweeping across the heated, flooded plains of Lower Bengal, suddenly strike against the hills. The vapour as it ascends gets condensed into fogs and mists, and finally, when it reaches the crest of the range, discharges itself in torrents of rain, unequalled by that recorded in any other part of the world.

At Shillong, which is only 30 miles north and a little higher than Cherrá Púnjí, the average rainfall is only about 85 inches; but between these two Stations three higher ranges intervene, which deprive the clouds in passage of a considerable portion of their moisture. During the three years ending in 1876, the average rainfall at Shillong was 83·65 inches.

The rainfall at Jowái, a subdivisional Station in the Jáintiá Hills, 26 miles distant from the plains, holds a mid place between that of Cherrá Púnjí and Shillong, and is estimated at 150 inches in the year. During the three years ending in 1876, the average rainfall at Jowái was 145·60 inches; but in the last of these years alone as much as 309·21 inches was registered, of which 134·34 inches fell in the month of June.

• 133 The District is liable to shocks of earthquake. In September 1875 considerable damage was done to the houses in Shillong by a shock which extended with great severity as far as Cauháti; and several minor shocks were experienced in the year 1876-77.

164 132 DISEASES, ETC.—Generally speaking, the climate of Shillong is pleasant and congenial to Europeans. English children thrive